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TAGS: IR IZ PGOV

SUBJECT: PRT MAYSAN: IA OFFICIALS SHARE SECURITY CONCERNS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Rob Waller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) This is a PRT Maysan reporting cable.

¶2. (C) Summary: In private and official discussions the Iraqi Army 10th Division Commander and his Maysan Brigade Commander expressed concern over the security situation in al-Amarah since the December 12 bombing. They advised that an ongoing series of successful raids on insurgents and criminals made the population nervous, and that it would not be prudent for PRT staff to conduct project visits at the present time. However, they said they would be able to provide full security for future visits when the situation was calmer. The officers added that provincial officials were complying with the ongoing operations. End Summary.

¶3. (C) While arranging a meeting for PRT staff on December 30, PRT Bilingual Bicultural Advisor (BBA) briefly chatted with the Iraqi Army (IA) 10th Division Commander Major General Habib Talib Abbas al-Husayn and his Maysan Brigade Commander, Brigadier General Nabil Yasin Ibrahim. The following day, PRT Deputy Team Leader (DTL) paid a courtesy call on General Habib to discuss the security situation in Maysan.

The (In)Security Situation

¶4. (C) Asked about Maysan's security situation and the status of the Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), Habib answered with three points: 1) JAM provides the linkage for &other countries8, 2) JAM receives training from &other countries8, and 3) there are different kinds of JAM in the province. Although he initially used 'other countries' to mean Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia he later only mentioned Iran. He mentioned a new group forming in Maysan called the &Ashab al-Qadiyya8 (Friends of the Cause), made up of disaffected or rejected JAM members. He added that this new group was receiving considerable outside support. He noted that while Muthanna and Nasiriyah were quiet, there was &no stability8 in Maysan at the present time. Asked about the prospects of the PRT traveling to the province to visiting ongoing and planned projects, he sought to reassure us, saying, &We have control. We have strength. We had a request from Baghdad to take control of the security situation.8

Warning to Provincial Officials

¶5. (C) Habib indicated that during his last visit to Amarah in the wake of the December 12, 2007 bombing, he spoke with members of the Provincial Council and representatives of the Governor. He told them that he had to fix the security situation and warned them not to get in his way. Habib added that he met with the Chief of Police (COP), giving him a &strong message8 and saying that he needed to make sure that he had their full cooperation. He said &that,s why we changed the chief of police8. Habib confirmed IA was

conducting regular, house-by-house raids, successfully catching both insurgents and criminals, and that provincial officials had not resisted these operations.

No JAM-Badr Reconciliation

16. (C) Asked about the possibility of renewed JAM-Badr Corps fighting in Maysan, Habib answered, &they will never reconcile8 adding, &Badr supports the Coalition. We (IA) support the Coalition. JAM blames Badr for the problems.8 Regarding Moqtada al-Sadr,s (MAS) recent renewal of the six-month &freeze8, Habib observed, &Sadr changed his mind because of the bad reputation of the Sadrists. He wants to give JAM a nice image; many people are criticizing him.8

Full support for PRT visits

18. (C) Understanding our strong interest in visiting project sites and provincial officials in Maysan, Habib repeatedly assured us of his readiness to control the situation and provide security. He made clear that he would spare no resource to ensure we had full protective cover while traveling and were able to visit project sites. Asked when we might be able to go, he said &It will be no problem. We will take you, but at the appropriate time. We will get you there and back safely, but we need a little time.8 In a personal visit with the BBA the day before, Habib said, &Right now, don,t go. If you want my advice, stay here. I can provide IA security when you do go, and your team will have no problem.8

Nabil: We need more time

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19. (C) During the BBA,s brief hallway encounter, Nabil confided that since the bombing the security situation in Maysan was very bad. He said authorities had indeed caught the perpetrators who confessed under interrogation to being JAM members receiving support from Iran. Nabil told the BBA that Iran-sponsored JAM had &taken over the city (Amarah)8. He clarified that they weren,t Farsi-speaking Persians but JAM members being paid by Iran. Asked about the purpose of the bombing, he opined that the Iranians needed violence to keep things unstable and that they did not want any safety or success in the south. Nabil insisted that he still needed time to clean out the insurgents. He added that they often did raids at night, and that the people were feeling insecure. He also noted that the confessions of the bombers provided useful intelligence that led to some successful raids. Nabil said they were arresting both criminals and insurgents, and that he would let us know when it was safe to visit.

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